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A Matter of
HollyA Christmas
Story.....

By C. Blair Eaton

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They sat before a blazing fire on the hearth. Thurlow, leaning forward in his chair, toyed idly with a pair of brass tongs, and Miss Wentworth industriously arranged chestnuts on the fire shovel. They were quite alone in the room. One after another the other guests had sought the dining room, where now Freddy Carver's comfortable voice could be heard stridently demanding candles to was the floor with.

"I hope I'm not overbearing in keeping you here to toast the chestnuts," said Thurlow to the girl. "Perhaps you prefer to dance."

"There'll be time enough for that," she replied. "Freddy Carver will keep them going until midnight."

"They're off," said Thurlow as the labored notes of a violin, a clarinet and a piano floated in to them.

A gust of wind whistled sharply outside, and the fire answered it by



SHE WAS STANDING BENEATH IT, HER EYES UPTURNED.

leaping up defiantly. The girl listened and smiled.

"Doesn't that sound Christmasy?" she said.

"It seems to me the 'peace on earth' spirit and all that sort of thing thrives best in a low temperature," the man suggested. "Christmas without a shiver or two isn't Christmas."

"It needs that and a house party here at the Oaks and Freddy Carver to start the dancing," she supplemented.

"That we may have the fire and the chestnuts all to ourselves," he hastened to add.

She laughed and flushed in the shadow of the ingle nook.

"Selfish," she chided.

"Of your society," he explained.

The hand with which she held the fire shovel over the log trembled a little. One of the chestnuts dropped into the flames and sputtered merrily. Thurlow settled back in his chair and for a time gazed steadily at the fire, seemingly lost in reverie.

"She was all in white," he declared with sudden irrelevance.

"Who was 'all in white'?" Miss Wentworth asked.

"Eh?" said Thurlow. "A girl I was thinking about, a nice girl, one Christmas eve like this."

"Oh!" said Miss Wentworth.

"She was standing beneath the library chandelier," Thurlow went on.

"There was a bunch of mistletoe just over her head."

"Careless little girl," she commented.

"Then he came along," said Thurlow, "and saw her standing there."

"Did he see the mistletoe?" Miss Wentworth asked.

"Eh? Yes, he saw the mistletoe," said Thurlow.

There was silence between them for a moment. Freddy Carver's voice was proclaiming in tones of resignation, "Well, the Virginia reel, then, if you insist."

"He was very young," Thurlow said at length, "and the combination made him feel very strange."

"The combination?" she inquired.

"Yes—the girl and the mistletoe, you know," said Thurlow. "Made him determined to go out and lay the world by the heels, and some time—some Christmas eve under the mistletoe—to bring it back to her and lay it at her feet."

"And?" she said encouragingly.

"And," repeated Thurlow, "he went, but the world was thoughtless. It refused to be laid by the heels according to his plans. But through it all—even when he had to save his cigars to smoke before possible clients and content himself with a cob pipe at other times—he conjured up the picture of the girl and the mistletoe and went at it. He's at it yet, poor devil!"

The fire shovel lay on the log and the chestnuts were scorching. Miss Wentworth was looking straight at them, but made no attempt to rescue them.

"Was he sure one world would satisfy her demands?" she asked ironically.

"Perhaps she wanted two or three."

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Thurlow was silent.
"Perhaps she didn't want even one world," Miss Wentworth said gently.

"It's good policy to bring one world at least," said he.

"Good business policy," she mocked. "You see," he explained, "she had wealth and 'position' and every eligible man in the county at her feet, and—"

"And the memory of a Christmas eve and a bunch of mistletoe," she interrupted.

Thurlow made vicious jabs with the tongs at the burning logs. He succeeded in upsetting the fire shovel and spilling the chestnuts into the blaze. The girl had turned her head from him, but he had a glimpse of one little ear flushed red.

Thurlow suddenly laughed harshly. "Goodness!" he said. "Just imagine his coming back to her on Christmas eve, with no world, no anything, save his worthless self! Imagine that! How ridiculous it would seem to her! She would laugh!"

She turned to him. Her eyes blazed, and something suspiciously like tears glistened on the lashes. Her hands were clenched.

"She'd be a wicked girl if she did," she said hotly.

Thurlow turned his eyes to the chandelier. In the flickering light of the fire he studied it carefully for several moments. Then he turned to the fire again.

"Thank heaven, it's holly up there on the chandelier! If it were mistletoe I'm afraid I'm afraid he might come back—tonight—without his world in tow."

Miss Wentworth rose. She, too, looked thoughtfully at the chandelier. "Oh, you foolish boy!" she said, laughing softly. "Did you ever see holly with leaves like that and—white berries?"

She was standing directly beneath it, her eyes upturned, her face glowing red in the firelight. "Dear, it's—it's"—Thurlow sprang from the chair.

Some minutes later Freddy Carver pulled the portieres apart.

"Aren't you dancing?" he inquired. "Come on out. And for heaven's sake stop scenting up the whole house with burnt chestnuts!"

Untiring.

"When I took you into partnership," said the indignant father, "I expected you to be untiring in your devotion to the interests of the business."

The son took one foot down from the desk long enough to strike a match to light his cigarette.

"I think I have been," said he, "You never have noticed me tire myself yet, have you, pa?"

Garden of the Soul.

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Brilliant.

"Did my diamonds call forth any comment?" asked Mrs. Cumrox.

"Yes, indeed," answered Miss Cayenne. "I heard several people refer to you as the human chandelier."—Washington Star.

Dear Things.

Miss Shugger—What a self possessed woman Miss Passay is! Miss Pepper—Yes, and I don't imagine she'd ever get a chance to dispose of the property.—Cleveland Leader

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